

work the process to establish a consensus budget by having a conference committee? How are Democrats supposed to deal with the Republicans as they up the ante, seeking to damage the American people by cutting off vital services in a shutdown? How do you deal with Republicans who are willing to default on paying America's debt, breaking our moral and legal obligations, and risking not just America's, but the world's, economy?

Earth to my Republican friends: America pays its bills. Always has, always will. It is the height of hypocrisy to blame this on the President, the Affordable Care Act, or the Democrats.

We wait breathlessly to see if the Republicans can agree to have anything to be voted on today; but the American people should insist that if my Republican friends are serious, they should bring their own budgets to the floor, allow the process to work to have a conference committee between the House and the Senate to reconcile our differences. Then we can act like grownups, not children throwing tantrums, and we wouldn't need to threaten the global economy over the debt ceiling.

CONTINUING RESOLUTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. WILLIAMS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. WILLIAMS. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the President yet again chose to bash Congress and blame the House Republicans for the failure of America's economy. I have seen him make this argument on television many times, but he never shows up on Capitol Hill to actually engage in productive conversations. He does talk, however, to the Russians, the Chinese, and the Iranians. This is no surprise. This is the same man who spends more time with Hollywood stars than Members of Congress.

It is not Congress that will shut our government down—it's our President. I would argue that he already has shut the government down. Five years ago, unemployment was at 5 percent and the national poverty rate was at 12½ percent, and approximately 30 million Americans received food stamps. Today, unemployment sits at 7.6 percent, the poverty rate exceeds 15 percent, a staggering 47.8 million Americans are enrolled in the food stamp program, and 48 million people between the ages of 18 and 64 have not worked one day in the last 12 months.

The President's economic agenda is only pushing us further into danger, and it's a disaster. For more than four decades, I have owned my business and I can say with certainty that today's economy is the toughest economy our country has seen from a small business standpoint.

Everything from health care to taxes to regulations is killing businesses and forcing job creators to play defense. Rather than generating profits, busi-

nesses are saving profits. This isn't the sign of a rebounding economy.

Despite this, in his public address to the Nation, President Obama said the economy has gained traction and continued to place the blame on Congress. What the American people need to hear are solutions, not sound bites. As a business owner, I know what it takes to create jobs. I live it every single day.

First, we need true tax reform. Lower taxes mean more taxpayers and more income. More specifically, we need to cut taxes for all taxpayers across the board and quit picking winners and losers.

The first step in doing this is cutting the corporate tax rate, the personal tax rate, the capital gains tax, the dividends tax, and eliminate forever the inheritance tax.

The next step is to begin a dialogue on whether we should move to a fair or a flat tax. Either one of these is certainly better than what we have today.

Second, we need to change health care policy. With the addition of ObamaCare, the government now comprises one-sixth of the Nation's economy. This is a complete travesty, and the private sector must be given more control of health care, not the Federal Government.

Consumers should be able to shop across State lines, which will create more competition. As a result, premiums would go down and services go up. That's what competition does. Consumers also need to own their own health care, not their employer, and not the Federal Government. It needs to be tax deductible. It needs to be portable so you can take it with you if you retire, you lose your job, or move around.

Third, we need to energize the energy business and not penalize the energy business. Let's favor an all-American approach for all sources of energy and let the private sector drive our energy, not our government. We do this by reducing regulations, letting the industry drill, and promoting the advancement of safe nuclear and alternative energy sources. Let the private sector tell us where to go.

Developing our domestic energy sources will undoubtedly lower energy prices for families and businesses.

Finally, we need to ensure America remains the world's superpower with a strong and well-equipped military. Our men and women in uniform must have the best equipment and must have the best training to fight for our freedom and our liberty.

It shouldn't even be an option to balance our Nation's books on the backs of our military. Doing so diminishes our military's readiness and threatens our national security, and it simply shows weakness across the world.

These are real solutions. They will allow businesses big and small to invest, to take risks, and they also will be rewarded. They show that the Federal Government believes in the pri-

vate sector, believes in entrepreneurship, and believes in people getting checks and lets everyone feel good about themselves.

We should never accept 7.6 percent as the normal level for unemployment. We should never accept a 15 percent poverty rate. We should never accept \$2.5 billion in free cell phones. We should never accept 15 percent underemployment. We should never accept 52 percent of our college graduates who are either underemployed or can't get a job. And we should never accept an economy that creates more food stamps than jobs.

It is time to wake up, America. Big Government has taken a toll on our families, our businesses, and our budgets. Let's get back to regular order in Washington and start passing responsible budgets that give our Nation much-needed certainty and security. Businesses and families do it every single day.

There is no question that America is the greatest country in the world. In the unforgettable words of Abraham Lincoln:

America is the last best hope of Earth.

Let's keep it that way by believing in the people and not the Federal Government and not Big Government. Let's say good-bye to ObamaCare, the largest takeover of the people by the government we have ever seen in our history.

It is truly our generation's Valley Forge. Let's be shepherds and not sheep, and let's be patriots and not victims. In God we trust.

LET'S PASS A SOUND BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. TONKO) for 5 minutes.

Mr. TONKO. Mr. Speaker, I have one basic question: What are we doing here? I mean just that. What are we really doing here?

Each day we talk about problems, problems, the real problems that face our country that are fixable with compromise and clearheaded solutions. Each day, this Chamber does nothing to overcome those challenges in front of us. Each day, the American people think we can't sink any lower or be any more dysfunctional.

Right now, there's talk about passing a 1-week budget to simply provide the time for elected officials—people charged with running the government of this great Nation of ours—to get along for enough time to pass yet another extension. Say it isn't so. One week. There are lemonade stands with better budgeting practices than what we have seen in this body in the past 2 years.

This is unacceptable, this is absurd, and it certainly is not what the American people deserve from any layer of government, especially their Federal Government. Let's get this done. Let's pass a budget, a budget that cuts where